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OLD SCHOOL-DAYS

AMANDA B. HARRIS

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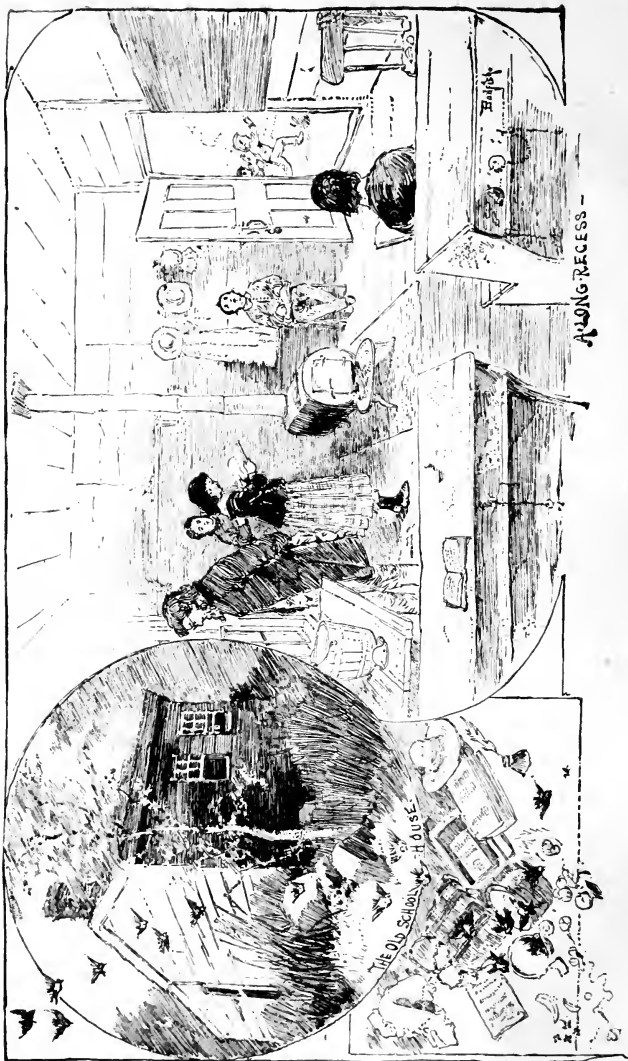
June 16.
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AN
CHAS. M.
HARRIS



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ALONG RECESS -

THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

OLD SCHOOL-DAYS

BY

AMANDA B. HARRIS, 1824-1917-
o.c.

Author of "WILD FLOWERS, AND WHERE THEY GROW,"

"FIELD, WOOD AND MEADOW RAMBLES," "PLEAS-
ANT AUTHORS FOR YOUNG FOLKS," etc.

TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY

W. PARKER BODFISH

h.C.

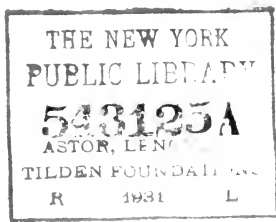


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Heaton 15 May 1931

OLD SCHOOL-DAYS.



I.

THE HOUSE AND THE CHILDREN.

TOO bad that the artist could not have taken the veritable schoolhouse — *my* schoolhouse, but you can't have what does not exist. That schoolhouse ceased to be many years ago; so he did the next best thing, and made a picture — here you have it — of one as like it as can be found, though of very inferior dimensions. That was a large one, and this is small, known as the “university schoolhouse,” wherefore is more than I can tell, save that some personages who ought to have been university men if they were not, had the foundation of their education here. One of them is extant, and he came to school here from a neigh-

boring district when he was such a little fellow that he was afraid when he heard the striped squirrels barking in the woods. His father paid a cent a day for this extra schooling — a pile of copper well spent.

The schoolhouse, which is not here or anywhere now, had seats enough for seventy scholars — you *could* cram in eighty or ninety, and away back somewhere in the long-time-ago there was that number, all under one teacher. The big boys up in the back seat have had a grim reality to me, on a dark background, like sombre pictures in an ill-lighted gallery, ever since I can remember. There is the same kind of indistinctness about them that there is about the earlier daguerreotypes — perhaps if they could be held in the right light they would come out in stronger lines. It was a long way from the little children's bench down at the front, where I belonged, away up the incline to that majestic back row where they sat. It looked to me then as high up and as far off as the singing-seats in the old-fashioned meeting-house did to us down in the pews; and those boys, I am sure, were all seven feet tall,

I don't remember ever seeing them anywhere else ; they might have "kept their sitting" there through that whole winter term for anything I can say to the contrary ; and I can't remember that they ever did anything but cipher. The "'rithmetic" they used was said to have had two extraordinary problems by way of alleviating the austerity of "figgers." Had it, or had it not ? Could it have been a figment of my small brain, or did I — yes, I did — really and truly hear it talked about that there was that well-known rhyme —

As I was going to Saint Ives
I met seven wives.
Each wife had seven sacks,
Each sack had seven cats,
Each cat had seven kits,
Kits, cats, sacks and wives,
How many were going to Saint Ives ?

And there was the other, which was an aggravating puzzle to us infants, about the man who had to cross the ferry with the fox, the goose and the bag of corn, and could not take them all at once or leave any two behind without risk. How we toiled

over it ; but thanks to what nature had done for us, we triumphed at last, and succeeded in getting them all safely over the ferry, and they travelled on.

There were what we called the great girls, too, one of whom belonged with the seven-foot boys ; the others were shorter, but we were afraid of them all, even more than we were of the boys. They all, however, boys and girls, passed off the scene with that first winter, and we knew them years later as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers and safe members of society ; they ceased to be bugbears, and their measure was never after on such a Titanic scale, though as scholars they still exist gigantic and to be stood in awe of.

There were some girls in the second range who were singers, and I know how they used to be called on at noon-time (most of the scholars carried their dinners), and one usually went through a long ballad about “ fair Elinor : ”

And Lord Thomas he lov-*ed* her dear.

It was very tragic ; but all mournful emotions were banished when one of the others gave us her

favorite new piece, which seemed to be all like this :

The huntsman is winding — is winding — is winding — is
winding,

The huntsman is winding,

The huntsman is wi-in-n-n-d-ing, is wind-d-d-ing, is wi-i-i-i-i-
ind — ding, wind — ding,

The huntsman is wind — ding, wind — ding

His horn.

It came down with a jerk.

He never did anything else, that huntsman ; just
so surely as the memory of a child five years old
can be trusted. She had another piece :

Douny roly gayly break,

In all a prouder tire,

Resplenden toe the glass a lake,

Reflecting liquid fire.

It was years after that I came upon the verse,
which had always been a puzzle to me, and found
it thus :

At dawn Aurora gayly breaks

In all her proud attire,

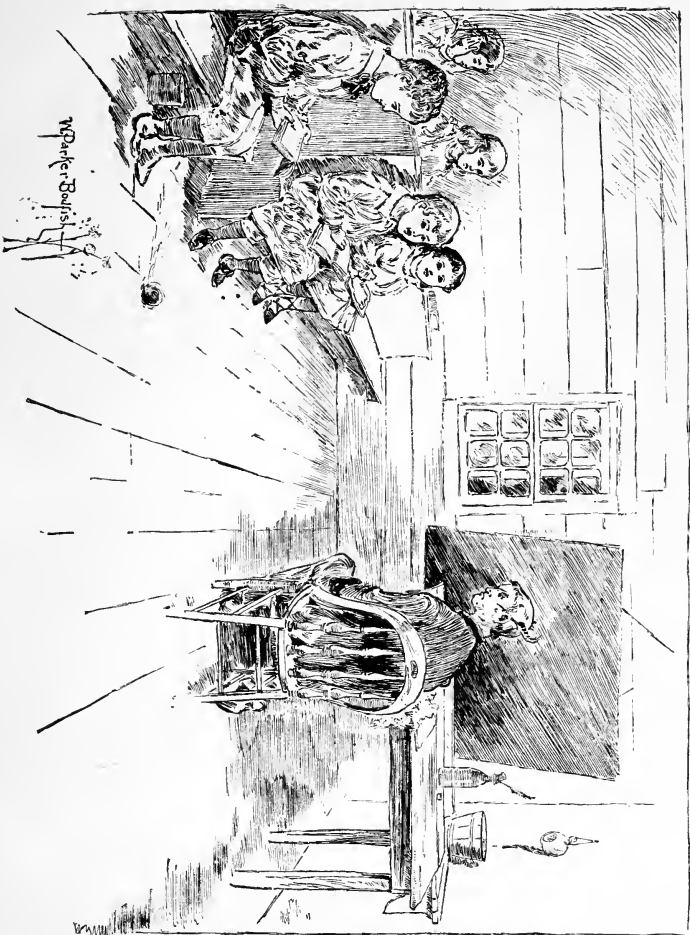
Resplendent o'er the glassy lake,

Reflecting liquid fire.

But she was a good singer, and so was the other ; and so was a third — one of the best-natured, most obliging girls that ever lived, who always sung for the marching. There was no piano or any kind of instrument, not even an accordion ; the only other choice was between a jew's-harp or playing a tune on a side-comb (did you ever try the latter? the great girls as well as the women wore pretty little side-combs, of tortoise-shell if they could afford it, of horn if they could not ; and many a tune used to be played in that way). She was a capital singer, with a loud, clear voice ; and she would get up and sit on top of one of the desks, and while the long procession of couples would file by, down one alley and up another, these martial words would ring out :

We are marching on *towards* Quebec,
While the drums are loudly beating ;
We are sure we shall meet with no attack,
For the British *are* retreating.

And on, and on, brisker and more brisk they went ; and we little stragglers who brought up the rear, felt as if we were an army with banners, the



WHERE THE ONE-SYLLABLE FOLKS SAT.



drums *were* beating and the fife was sounding, and the British were in full flight before us. We were all on fire, victorious and glorious, cheeks blazing, eyes shining, and feet keeping up a quickstep that grew quicker and more quick till the music snapped short off and it all ended in a regular stampede. I don't know where she picked up that verse, but I suppose it had some relation to the "Old French War." I shall never forget it, or that it always sounded as if she said "to odd Squebec," and I *could not* imagine what it meant.

That house was planned with a rising floor like that of an opera house. Away up, up, was that high tier running the whole side of the building; the one lower, and so on, down five ranges to the level where was the long bench on which the A, B, C, and one-syllable folks sat. They did not need a desk before them, poor little three and four-year-olds, but there was one behind, just near enough for them to lean the tops of their heads against at the immediate risk of dislocating their necks, and within convenient reach for the two-syllable row who sat next to give their hair a yank.

Two alleys divided the ranges of seats into sections ; and when any of the upper boys had occasion to come down they put their hands on the desks at the side and swung themselves all the way if the master was not looking ; and we little ones used to do it at noon time, and slide down, and it was delightful. That is, we slid in the winter when we had shoes on ; in the summer we could not because we went barefoot. It is only one winter and one summer that I recollect the room in that way, for it was soon after remodeled.

Things happened in those alleys ; sometimes a marble, or an apple, would come rolling down, speed by us and go clear across the floor ; and strange to relate, not a boy or girl up there where it started was conscious of the event, every one being so absorbed in study. It was terrifying to us, even paralyzing, a momentous occurrence ; and the voice of the teacher made us quake as he commanded the culprit to come down and "out into the floor." That fearful combination of words meant — oh ! what did it *not* mean of punishment ? No one came ; and so the guilty movable, which had

had the misfortune to set itself to going and had not been able to stop itself, was chased by him in the most inglorious manner, seeing that he nearly pitched headlong more than once, but finally pursuing it into a corner, he pounced upon it, captured it, and put it in prison, in that awful place which was the receptacle of so many contraband articles—the master's desk; and then a stifled titter would be heard repeating itself in a mysterious way from all quarters. as evasive as the rolling object itself and as irresponsible.

I think that master must have had a cruel streak in his make-up, for he would ferule a boy till both hands were blistered, shouting, "Give me your hand!" and when he had done with that, "Now the other!" till we, lookers-on, every pupil of us I do believe, had murder in our hearts. I heard some of them mutter that they "should like to kill him;" and even a child must instinctively understand that a punishment which makes him feel like *that*, is not right. One man called a little fellow out in front, and griping the top of his head with his great iron hand spun him around like a whirli-

gig making a pivot of the poor, dazed head which must have been giddy for a week after.

Children have a keen sense of injustice, and never forget it if they have been wronged. There was a little girl who sat behind me, a timid, well-behaved scholar, who came to school one day with a rose, and while she was studying her reading lesson she unconsciously raised it to her nose and smelled it. The teacher happening just then to have her eyes that way, called out, "Little girl, come out in the floor! Now, stand there, and hold up that rose!" And the shrinking creature, who felt that it was a disgrace she could not survive, stood with eyes that she was ashamed to raise from the floor ready to overflow with tears, a big lump in her throat and her face crimson, holding aloft the harmless flower till, after a time that seemed weeks, she was allowed to take her seat. Her mates were furious about it, and at noon-time they took what they thought was a suitable revenge by composing a little couplet:

Old Miss Macfarr
Swallowed an iron bar;

and making a picture of her in the act, a copy of which has been handed down in remembrance of



OLD MISS MACFARR
SWALLOWED AN IRON BAR.

her. It was literally a wood-cut, being cut in the woodwork in the entry; it remained for years.

Of that schoolhouse while it was on the ascending plan, I remember just one summer day. There is nothing left in my memory of anything immediately before or after. It was the last day of school, and the "committee men" and some of our parents were coming in—they would sit on the long seat which extended on each side from the teacher's desk, and face us. I had no fear, however, because I had no little verse to speak, as the poor infants of to-day are obliged to do; they did not do those things then. We on the low front row had nothing before us except to hear the larger ones questioned in their books.

But it was a gala day to be remembered for several seasons. In the first place there was so much decorating—I can see it now, like a bower; the floor so clean, and sprinkled with water till it was cool as a grotto, and at one side the big fireplace (which ceased to be that very fall after), full of green pine boughs, fresh, feathery, and sending out that delicious balsam of the woods, and the room had a dim green light from the leafy curtains at the windows. Our schoolhouse had then, and for years,

outside wooden blinds, tight and impervious to light as a door, or like one great plain shutter swinging to and hasping at one side, except when they hung by a single hinge as was too often the case, but they were of no earthly use; and as no curtains or shades were provided the scholars found a way of keeping the sun out that was both ingenious and pleasing. They used to bring in green boughs and insert them, stem end upwards, between the two sashes of the open window; and as fast as they became faded, fresh ones were put in their place. It was one of the luxuries of school life to go after them, and the children took turns in doing it, getting the teacher's permission, and they would come in like a festal procession, or as if "Birnam wood" had "come to Dunsinane." I know how there were pale green bush leaves, which were crisp and tender as a salad and of a pleasant acid, and they were eaten with the relish that children always have, which children everywhere alike have, for sorrel and crabbed green apples and all such things; and how from the oaks there would rattle off so many immature acorns, which the infants above named

used to appropriate for their play-houses, making a whole tea-service, the tea-kettle too, by bending bits of grass stem for spout and handle and sticking them into holes made by a pin. What uncommonly lovely times ! What facilities for enjoyment, and what privileges ! Really it was worth while to have gone to school when such things were !

The extra decoration for that day was in the shape of oak-leaf trimming, which every country child must sometime or other have had a hand in making, done by doubling one leaf over and fastening it to another by the stem, and so on and on, in a chain, as long as you pleased, of those stiff but finely outlined leaves in that deep glossy green.

I suppose the " committee men " and the parents came ; but nothing remains in my memory but the picture of the room and of the teacher as she walked in, dressed in white, with her hair in curls on her shoulders ; she wore a green silk calash, and her cheeks were of the color of a sweet-brier rose. The costume and her beauty made a lasting impression on one child's mind, and she still exists there as fresh as a miniature on ivory.



Mrs. Northrup

The little girls in those days wore gowns and pantalettes alike, "for every day." The gowns would be called "long" by the little girls of to-day, and those other articles certainly were very long and straight and narrow, coming clear to the ankle joint, and not much more than broad enough to slip the foot through. Very comical they would look now unless they happened to be the fashion. Being the fashion then, it was all right; and it never struck us as anything out of the way that one girl of seven or eight used to wear a gown of black Canton crape, of the crinkly sort, made out of one of her mother's, and pantalettes of the same, coming clear down to the tops of her shoes, and a long white apron tied by strings, like an old woman's, around her waist. The white apron was for dress-up occasions; in the forenoon, and for every day at school, nearly all wore "tiers" made high-necked; and very tidy, neat little garments they were, keeping the gown nice.

The gowns, or frocks (you would call them "dresses"), were made very full both in the waist and skirt; for summer gathered into a belt, while

the woollen winter ones were pleated. All the girls wore flannel in the winter, often home-made cloth, dark-blue or wine color, and now and then a plaided one; and for best there were very handsome bombazettes, scarlet being the color selected by the prudent mothers who looked out for something that would not fade; and fade, that old-fashioned scarlet never did, holding its own so long as there was a rag of the goods left. I remember some parties where some lively little girls in scarlet dresses with white pantalettes (full ones gathered into a band at the ankle for best), colored morocco shoes, bare arms and neck, and hair loose down their shoulders with a ribbon tied around their heads like a snood to keep it back, fluttering and skipping about, and making the room look as gay as if a flock of bright-winged birds had been let loose there.

Those gowns were finished with a bias band at the neck and fastened behind with hooks and eyes, with a little snapping affair at the top of the row which sprung together with a catch and held fast. The sleeves were gathered into a band above the elbow; and there was a time when it was the style

(for "dress up") to have them puffed out like a balloon; and to bring this about an extra pair of sleeves was made, of white muslin starched stiff, and then carefully crowded into the gown sleeves where they were made secure by basting to the "arm size." Such a pair, each as large as a two-quart bowl, I have in mind as they looked, hanging by a string from a nail near the kitchen stove in order that they might not get jammed or crushed while thoroughly drying. How they were ever ironed remains a mystery, and probably will till the same style comes round again; but I have a suspicion about the starch, having once seen two women in process of making some from raw potatoes; there seemed to be a great show of those tubers, many parings, earthen pans, and a good deal of pouring clear water back and forth, and leaving something they were talking about "to settle," and at last there was a bed of snow white damp, heavy starch at the bottom of one of the pans. Perhaps, however, the home-manufactured potato starch and the inflated sleeves had nothing to do with one another.

Such a thing as a straw hat for school wear was unknown, but the loveliest "gypsies" were worn at church, distractingly becoming to any tolerably good-looking face. For school, sun-bonnets of gingham or lawn, blue, pink, buff and such pretty colors; they came well over the face and had big capes; they were made with clusters of shirrings into which stiff cords or small round rattans were run to keep them in shape, and when they were to be washed, the rattans had to come out. In the winter there were hoods made also by the mother's hand, of bright-colored stuffs (there were no Shetland and Berlin wools then, though there were beautiful worsted yarns called "crewel" used for some kinds of fancy work); sometimes it was bombazette, and after a while there was a kind of cloth called "Circassian" — I wonder if the name had anything to do with the country where they sold girls for wives to the Turks, which we used to read about in *Parley's Geography* I think, and there was a picture of a Circassian girl looking as if she did not quite wish to be sold.

The boys wore short spencers and long trousers;

in summer, palm-leaf hats, and in winter, cloth caps, made at home, or by some woman in the neighborhood who had a special knack at it, sometimes flat-topped with a piece of rattan in a welt around the edge, but oftener of several wedge-shaped pieces seamed together, and all had visors of stiff leather stitched on with linen thread through holes made by an awl for the purpose ; these visors were always partly ripping off, or being jerked off in rude play, and there were boys who are to be remembered as usually going about with the visor hanging half-way over their foreheads, being held by some happening of double stitches or an unyielding knot in the thread. That must have been a rugged set of lads, for there was no wearing of great coats to school ; one boy, a little fellow, used to come in a " josey coat " of green plaid, a kind of ulster-like affair with a tiny cape (perhaps some of the other small folks were similarly attired), and his sister had a genuine Mother Hubbard cloak of " Circassian." The two if they could step forth now would be made great account of as such quaint Kate Greenaway designs.

Now all I have to add is, that in the fall we either went to the shoemaker or he came to us and our feet were measured for calf-skin shoes (there were no "rubbers"), which were water-proof, and the soles thereof were thick, strong and serviceable. The pretty morocco ones, made to have a ribbon bow, or if higher cut called "bootees" and laced, were for parties, visiting and going to meeting in summer, and they were as dainty as dolls' shoes, in scarlet or crimson, or pea-green or blue or something as gay.

By the time May came round, everybody's children, it made no difference whether they were rich or poor, were all agog to begin to go barefoot; and distracted mothers could only hope to settle the matter by the promise — I have heard it a hundred times — "as soon as the yellow butterflies come. It is too cold now. Wait till the yellow butterflies come." Be sure there was the sharpest lookout kept for those responsible creatures on whom so much depended, and the first arrival was reported with breathless haste. Shoes and stockings once off, the joy of bare feet in the dew-wet

grass, in wading the brooks, and even pattering along gravelly roads, was too great for a country child to be willing to put them on again, except



THE FIRST YELLOW BUTTERFLIES.

when special occasions commended the propriety of doing so, till the coming of frosty nights made it necessary.

II.

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.

IT was a district school I am writing about, oftener pronounced "*de*strict," kept for two terms in the year, the summer one beginning on the first Monday in May and lasting sixteen weeks; the winter one on the first Monday after Thanksgiving (usually somewhat controlled by that movable festival), and continuing on, I suppose, till the allotment of school money was used up.

I transport my present self back to one of those blue, bright May mornings. There were a good many children there, and about eight o'clock on that first day of school, they started to pick out their seats. Up early, washed and brushed and with new summer clothes on, faces shining, school books in a big calico bag which was stretched out to the

utmost where there was a slate or atlas to carry, I see them on their winding way, from "down the mill road," from "upon the plains," from everywhere. Not as many as the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" piped after him, but fifty or sixty or seventy, and the air is shrilled (may I coin that word?) with the thin little voices, and it rings with the sweeter and stronger tones of the older ones, and they fill the village with themselves. They go up the gravelly hill — we called it the Hill of Science — past the big rock, to the brown schoolhouse with the shutter-like red blinds, open now after many weeks of vacation. There is a scramble to "pick out" a seat — ah! already some of the best ones are marked with chalk, some earlier bird having been sharp enough to "catch the worm," perhaps by coming on the Saturday before, and on the reserved desks lie the books of the claimant, whose prior right you may think, if you have not had personal experience, that none will be found so bold as to dispute. But not so; the one who means to have it must sometimes plant himself in it, where he will sit and with a good grip on the sides, stick fast,

maintaining his ground *vi et armis*, determined to "fight it out on that line."

And then a confusion of threats and retaliations is likely to arise among the rudest boys and girls, "I'll tell my father of you!" "Who cares if you do?" "*My* father's committee man: he'll see to you!" "I'll tell the teacher!" "Teacher! you don't *know* her!" "I do too: she boards 't *my* house." Then comes that sing-song speech we have all of us heard: "*I* know something that *you* don't know."

As nine o'clock draws nigh, there is breathless wonder about the teacher if she happens to be a stranger — we always found out her name beforehand. It was the question of every child, persisted in till the matter was decided upon: "Who is going to keep the summer school?" And then the news was set to going that the "committee-man" had hired such a person, from such a place. Let me not get this official confused with the "committee *men*." It was his business to provide the teacher and see to the material interests of the district, whereas, they were vested with high author-





ity over the school affairs in general throughout the town. This man escorted the new mistress in, pronounced her name, departed, and usually was seen no more. As soon as she had taken a survey of us in the mass, she would say, "I will take your names. What is yours?" beginning at one corner.

Some comical incidents occurred during this proceeding at one time and another. There were always new scholars, and you could have heard that much-written-about "pin drop" while we waited to hear. Once there was a puny girl who announced herself in a voice as strong as the name was long, as Wilhelmina Tryphena Cunningham; and we had one Virgin Ina, who had a baby sister named Attaline Excella at home. The little Virgin was a dear, sweet child, and when she grew older she had sense, and had herself called Virginia. Then there was a whole family of children who, with the one exception of George and Georgianna, seemed to belong with Spanish and Italian cavaliers and Northern sea-rovers — Frederico Francisco and Hugo Rinaldino, and Rodolphus Rondo, and Clovious Ulrico.

We had one unlucky little fellow who stammered out his name, Harrison, so indistinctly that the teacher, to satisfy herself, asked, "Did you say Blenerhasset?" The school caught it up, and not "Harrison," but "Blenerhasset," was he as long as he lived in town; and one midget of a girl burst out triumphantly as if she would be sure to get it all right this time, "Ann Sophia Mason, three years old;" and the name had to drag that little tail after it till she had grown to be a woman. You cannot suppress in children the quick, keen sense of the ludicrous; they are sharper with their ears than a wild animal, instant in their suggestiveness, and their powers of tormenting are not to be gauged or measured.

One summer a new family moved in, of that class which Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe calls "shiftless" and the limp son of an exceedingly limp mother came to school, the best-natured and the most snarly-haired child in the world, and he made such shocking work in repeating his multitude of names that the boys furnished him with a combination one of their own: Shackamaxon Fricassee Lyman Lee Bootjack. He liked it well enough, the easy little

man, but his mother had an impression that it was not respectable, and she came one day and complained to the teacher that he was "picked upon," and that personage, in high displeasure at the scholars, forbade its being used; but it did as much good as for Mrs. Partington to try to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean with her broom.

Poor little Fricasse, with his shock of hair of the color of corn-silk! — there was something funnier happened than giving him his name. I saw it, for he was in my class, and we were out in the floor reading. It was one awfully hot summer afternoon, and we all noticed that he had on a thick jacket suspiciously buttoned clear to his chin; and he looked as if he would pretty soon collapse, when the teacher, who was always specially kind to him, directed him to take it off and go in his shirt-sleeves, and she set to work and helped him out of it. Shirt sleeves indeed! He had but one on; the shirt was not finished. One sleeve was safely in, with the needle still there where his mother had stuck it when she left off sewing — the other arm was bare. She had sent him to school in that way,

and charged the obedient little martyr to keep his jacket on, his winter jacket it was too. But he did not care much, he was used to such things.

He was an affectionate creature, and entirely oblivious of the rules of school; he would sometimes speak out loud when the mistress came near, "Teacher! I love ye! Teacher! ye said ye'd kiss me, but ye *didn't*!" One day that mother of his had been buying some hair-oil, and she spent so much time anointing him that he did not get into school till his class was out reading. He burst into the room, bringing the odor of much bergamot, the kink all taken out of his curly hair which looked as if it had been licked, and rushing straight through the class, stopped not till he reached the teacher, where, inclining his head before her, he shouted joyfully, "Teacher! smell my head!"

There were a few things about those summer schools which would strike the children of these times as rather novel, to say the least, the most novel as well as the most satisfactory of which was "going out to study." You could hear the



"TEACHER! SMELL MY HEAD!"





request about as soon as reading in the Testament was through with in the morning: "Please, ma'am, mayn't I gwout an' study? I won't go 'n'y further'n the great rock." And another voice, the voice of one who was a crony of the first speaker, would come in after her, or him: "And mayn't I? We won't talk to one another. We'll study."

This would go on till about six had advanced their plea; and there was a great deal of competition about who should get the chance to speak first, for in the ratio of your promptness was apt to be your success in getting consent, always provided that you had not already been favored more than your share. If you were out yesterday and day before, it was somebody else's turn.

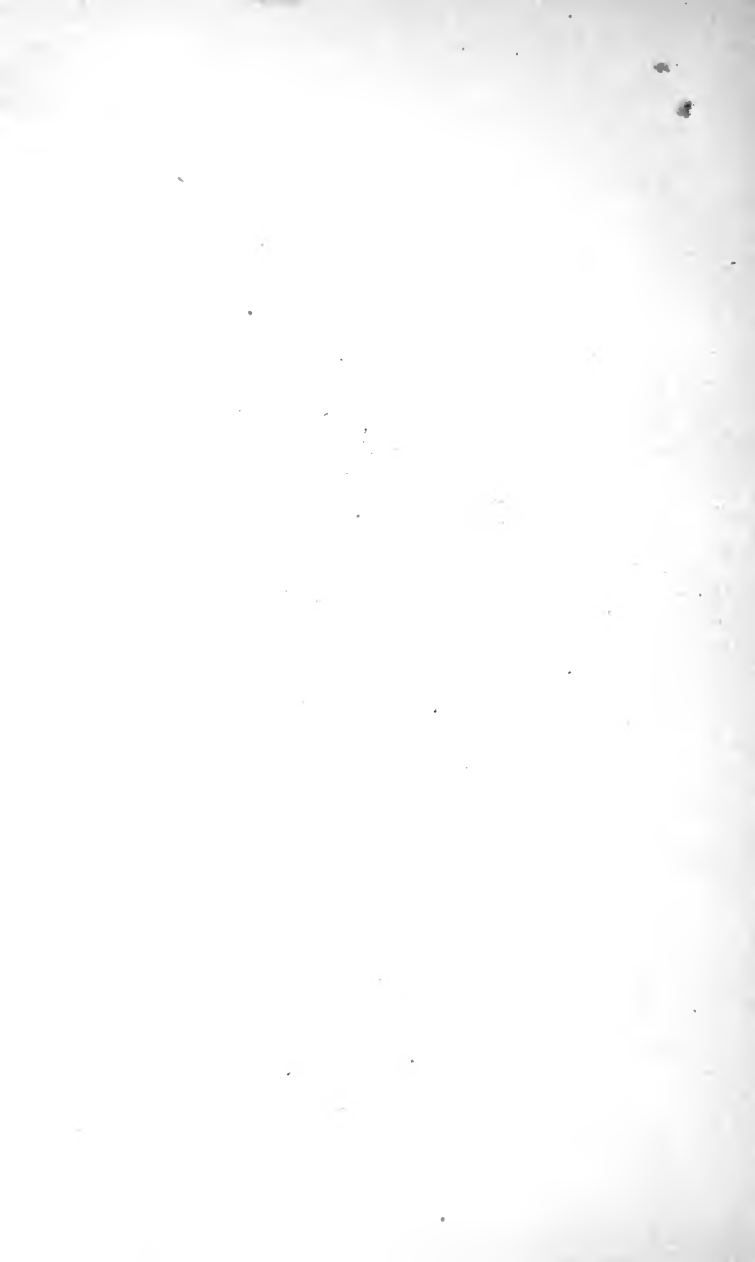
Not more than five or six were allowed out at one time; when they were called in, by smart raps with a ferrule on the window-sash, perhaps another installment could go. It looks to me now as if I had a great many of these outings. All the geography that I ever learned was committed to memory either while I was perched up in an apple-tree, or sat on the great rock or under the shadow of it. At this

moment I could bless the memory of two or three of those teachers for those glorious out-of-door opportunities. Was not that the most rapturous kind of going to school? Does it not transcend all modern improvements? What is the Concord Summer School of Philosophy, in a chapel, compared to it? I would not have missed it for all the abstruse knowledge that philosophers ever taught — that intimate companionship with birds and wild flowers, with the pastures and rocks, turf and green trees.

Opposite the schoolhouse there was a pasture, on the near outskirts of which grew several scattered apple-trees; and beyond the schoolhouse, on the Hill road, there was a grove of oaks. We had our choice of the shade afforded by the rock, the apple-trees, or the oaks; consequently we dispersed according to our several tastes: two pupils could remain together if they promised not to hold verbal communication, but more than two were not to be trusted. Up in an apple-tree is, by all odds, the most desirable place in which to study *Olney's Geography* — as I may have intimated, I know no other; *Peter Parley* was not for me, although I hung



"A MOST RAPTUROUS KIND OF GOING TO SCHOOL!"



with admiration over the pictures in it, especially of the English lady and the French one, and from that day my ideas of the suitable finish to the bottom of the skirt of a lady's dress were established; there should be just such a ruffle as there was at the hem of one of those gowns. I also found delight in the poetic element represented by the rhymes beginning,

The world is round, and like a ball
Seems swinging in the air.

Geography I have always accounted a delightful study; to be sure there were the ever-recurring hard paragraphs about "the chief productions" of the country in which was that day's lesson — we did not exactly know what it meant; but still it was all learned by rote up among those green leaves moving and quivering in a light wind that came straight from the blue hill-tops, birds were flitting in and out over our heads, little green apples dropping on the page, and the air full of the breath of a clover-field in bloom.

I wish I could say as much for *Smith's Arithme-*

tic and the *English Reader*. We used to extract a trifle of sentiment out of the former. Oh! ghost of Roswell C. Smith, if ghost you *are*, which I hope not, I must thank you in the name of myself and those of my companions who "could not bear arithmetic," because you were so good as to put in those tempting problems about the hare and the greyhound, and the gentleman and his guineas, and the drover with his cattle, and the clerk who bought that stock of goods in the country store, comprising two pieces of calico, two hymn books, one bladder of snuff, forty empty barrels and a list the length of your hand of all kinds of articles you could think of, but above all for that long one which tells how a lady and a gentleman widely separated had a fancy to look at a certain bright star every evening at the same moment, and all the particulars.

But that *English Reader*! How my class ever come by it, or into it, I can't imagine. We certainly could not have been jumped from the alphabet into it: even the Quincy School system could not do *that*. There seems to be a gap somewhere, a hia-

tus ; it makes me think of the spaces between the reigns in history which were marked with the word "interregnum." But I recall us, out in the floor, "toeing the crack," as the classes had to (and it was easy enough, seeing that gaps between the boards were wide and we were barefoot), then with fingers of one hand between the leaves of the closed book, the book hanging down at the side, we heard the word "*Attention !*" exploded from the lips of the teacher, and the girls of the class swept in a courtesy to the floor, the boys made a bow, a jerky sort of bow, and we were ready to begin.

What an infliction on a child's nature, what a violation of child rights was that book ! Perhaps Lindley Murray was well qualified to concoct a grammar—I am not prepared to dispute it ; but I was brought up on the "Part first" of his reader, and against that I protest. Think of such sentences as these in what he meant for preparatory lessons :

In order to acquire a capacity for happiness, it must be our first study to rectify inward disorders.

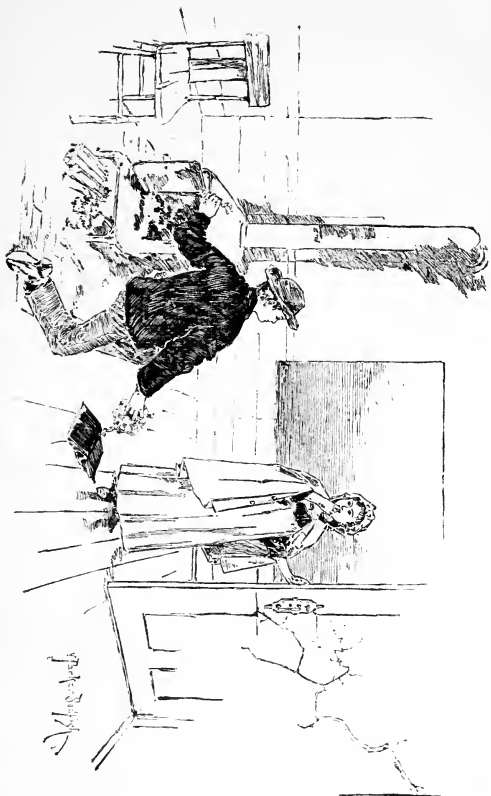
A temperate spirit, and moderate expectations, are

excellent safeguards of the mind, in this uncertain and changing state.

That (there are pages of it) is supposed to be easy reading — oh, such choky reading as we found it ! it makes me tired now, and after we had dragged through it we came to “narrative pieces” which were not much relief ; and then, too soon, we fell upon “didactic ;” and then “argumentative,” up to which time we had struggled bravely, but there, on that cheerless shore, we stranded, for by that time the last day of school had come. I do not know how many summers and winters I was reading in that book, but I should think there were ages. And there never was a school long enough for the *English Reader*. With each new term we began at the beginning, and as no scholar, however glib of tongue, was able to make much headway on a page, we never were known to come even in sight of “Part II.,” where the “Pieces in Poetry” were put ; on that page, in my old copy, there is a drawing of a girl, waiting.

Meanwhile, there was a class above us in the *His-*

THEY TURN TO BUILD THE FIRE.



torical Reader, and we used to listen with envy to the chapters about Socrates, the death of Antony and Cleopatra, the execution of Charles the First, the Salem witches and Hannah Dustin. Even the account of that old Greek philosopher drinking his cup of hemlock, Cleopatra with the asp, Charles laying his head on the block, and Mrs. Dustin driving her tomahawk into the Indians' skulls, had an enlivening effect. They set some of our faculties at work; the pictures, too, were suggestive; and there was a poem, "The Warrior's Wreath," which quickened us like a trumpet, though a gory thing it was — they were sparing of poetry then. "The Negroes' Lament" was one of the most interesting pieces; where you have Longfellow and Whittier and Lowell and Holmes and all the poets, we had a few scattered things; I remember that we highly appreciated the one called "The Common Lot," beginning :

Once in the flight of ages past,
There lived a man : and who was **he**?
Mortal! howe'er thy lot is cast,
That man resembles thee !

Only I think we used to make a parody on it, and where "man" occurs we had "boy," and for the "mortal," who is apostrophized, we had the name of one of our mates, Moses, or Edward, or somebody. It can't be said that we did not make the most of what we had.

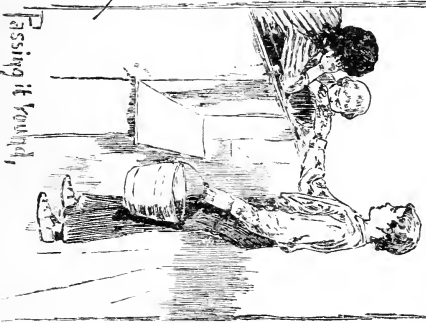
By and by, happy day! came Porter's *Rhetorical Reader*. No trouble in getting through that in one term of school. We never wearied of it. Then, for the first time, we had practical and pleasant understanding of "inflection" and "accent," and saw what change of tone could be, and felt the picturesque and poetic element there was in reading, bringing out the sense, and seeing what a skilful and discriminative study of elocution was capable of doing. Scores of reading-books have been introduced since then; but the pupils who discovered a new world of enjoyment in that, will never be willing to say that there has been a better.

Away back, I began speaking about some of the customs in the school, which are now obsolete. There was no bell to ring the pupils in, so the teacher rapped loud and long on the window; and

Going for water



Passing it round,



to call the attention of the school, or dismiss a class, the same smart rapping was repeated on the desk. There was no janitor, and the girls took turns in sweeping the school-room, and the boys in building fires when fires were needed. Every day through warm weather the floor was sprinkled, or, to tell it just as it was, water ~~was~~ liberally dashed on, sometimes several times in the course of the day, even while school was in session. Being made of unpainted boards the water soon soaked away except in some worn spots and long hollows where it remained in dusty rivulets ; and some of those dreadful infants on the front row would stealthily advance one foot after the other and dip their toes in it.

Besides the watering of the floor, the scholars themselves were watered at least once, and sometimes twice, in the forenoon and the same in the afternoon. Two of the boys who wanted some kind of an excuse to go out, would break in on the contentment of the school, that is, one of them would, by calling out : "Teacher, needn't James and I gwout and get a pail of water ?" and consent being given, they almost scampered to a short bench be-

hind the door where there was a wooden pail and the most unwholesome-looking rusty tin-dipper, and off they went down the hill to "Mis' Burns' well," being gone long enough to draw water enough to put out a fire ; but then that schoolhouse hill was *so* hard to climb, it was *such* a tug for two good-



THE INFANTS ON THE FRONT ROW.

sized boys to get up with a pail of water, strange that they did not meet with the fate of Jack and Jill, seeing that in their case the load was going up instead of down ! The teacher usually went several times to the window, like sister Anne, on the watch, and even gave a warning *rap, rap, rap*, to hasten them, whereupon they came panting in, with wet hair and newly washed faces. As soon as the waiting school had a glimpse of them, half a dozen

eager voices would cry, "Teacher, mayn't I pass round the water?" and some one was selected who went to every seat, presenting the dripping rusty dipper to each pupil, which process took about twenty minutes, resulting in a good many haps and mishaps that left the floor in a more soppy state than it was before.



III.

THE LITTLE FOLKS ; AND THE MISCHIEVOUS ONES.

IN gathering up these odds and ends about the schools that used to be, it occurs to me that there must have been a remarkably large delegation from what the older classes were wont to speak of as "the infantry," little toddlers of three years, and sometimes even younger (younger than the law allowed), of whom it was said that their mothers sent them to get them out of the way. Their attendance was under protest, and more than one much tried teacher was heard to say that a cradle ought to have been sent with them. Since then, and lately, I have visited a schoolroom nicely furnished in all its appointments, where there was a cot bed off in a quiet corner on the teacher's platform.



W. Parker & Co. 1857

It seems to me that some of those babies must have been years in learning their A, B, C's. They were four times a day brought face to face with the alphabet on the first page of *Cummings' Spelling-book*, and each time you would think they had never seen the letters till then. I especially remember one delicate, pensive schoolmistress who taught the summer school for two or three successive years, who had more than her share of these beginners; although, for obvious reasons, it was always in summer that the infantile element was out in force. I can see that poor young woman, in my mind's eye, tired and almost ready to cry, patiently hearing the lessons of fifty pupils, and then, the last thing before recess, going around and picking up those sleepy creatures, bringing them out "into the floor," seating herself in her chair and gathering them before her, often keeping her arm around as many as she could clasp, while all crowded on her, digging their dusty feet into her ankles or the skirt of her fresh print gown, fingering her belt and watch chain, and venturing a chubby but not over-clean dear little hand on her cheek or her hair —

doing anything and everything but attend to their letters.

Pitiful little martyrs to science! The instant she pointed her bodkin at a letter, every vestige of intelligence went out of the faces before so bright — I have seen the same thing within a week, and wondered thereat; perhaps the routine, the sameness, the manner of teaching, or some vague feeling connected in the baby-mind with learning, accounts for that sudden shutting off of vivacity; it was not true of all, but of many.

She used to resort to many devices — pinning a letter on the sleeve of the child, or running the risk of giving a peculiar name to a certain letter, which was sometimes followed with amusing results. One little fellow was made to fix *Q* in his mind as having a tail, and the small *i* as with a dot; accordingly one day when some peculiarly critical and susceptible visitors were in, he yelled out, "*coof with a tail to it,*" and "*i with her daughter,*" ending his accomplishments with "*t with a hat on.*"

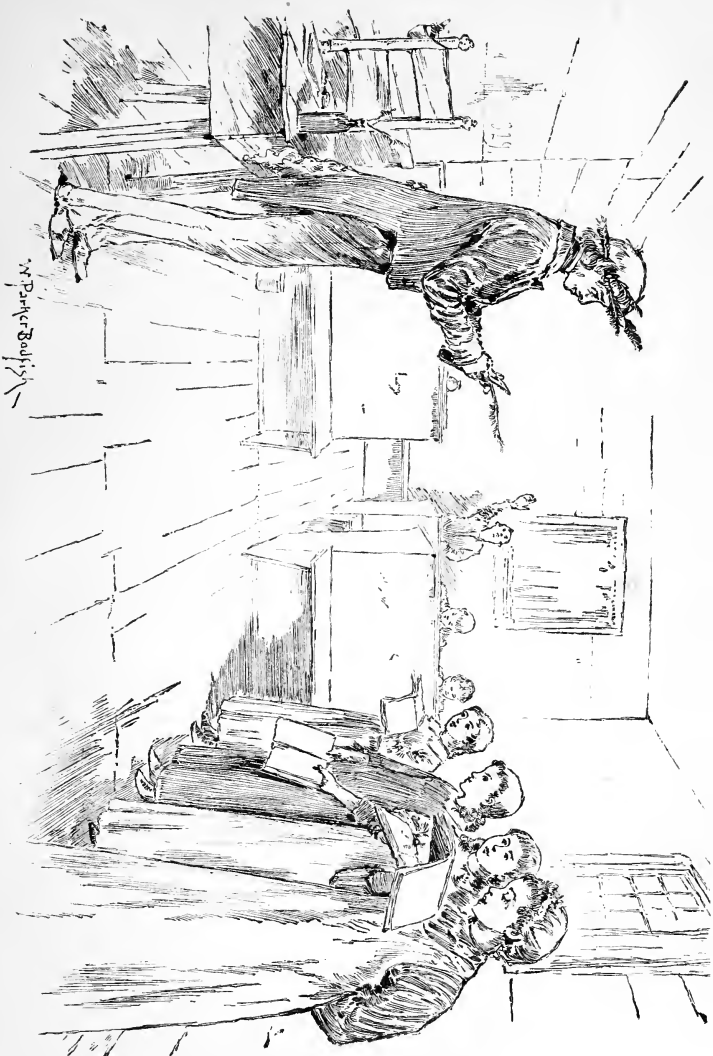
The method of appealing to the picturesque sometimes works well, and sometimes it does not;

it was found on another occasion that an uncommonly smart boy failed in the application of words to the cuts by the side of them, when he read off in his words of three letters, c-a-t, *kitten*, reaching the triumphant climax in j-u-g, *bottle full of ink*. Another little wight who had ideas of his own, made his first day at school one not to be forgotten by his prompt, incisive, loud, w-h-o, *whoa!*

That meek young teacher — her greatest trial was with the big girls who were as tall as she was and not many years younger. It was their delight to do things which they knew she would not dare try to punish them for. One forenoon one of them rose and asked to go out, she wanted “a drink of water,” but as it lacked only a few minutes of recess time, the mistress refused; upon which the second one rose, with the same words, and then the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, one after another, stringing the question right along, “May I go out? I want a drink of water.” “May I go out? I want a drink of water?” till nothing else was heard in the schoolroom except the added muttering, “I’m most choked to death.”

She shook her head to each, with the same answer that it would be recess in a few minutes, and kept about her duties, but with a look on her face as if she knew there was thunder in the air.

Well, recess came ; and recess was over ; and the pupils were all back in their places except the great girls. Their seats, which took the whole back row, were vacant, and there was an ominous hush, broken at length by the door being thrown wide open, and in walked, with the imperious mien of an injured but defiant Zenobia, one girl, bringing a tin pail of water, which she set with emphasis on her desk ; at a measured interval came another, with a tin pail full of water, which, with equal vigor, she set on her desk ; so, haughtily and slowly, with impressive pauses in the procession, came they, one by one, seven in all, tin pail in hand ; and on the long desk was ranged the row of glittering pails, drawn up as if in battle array ; and the girls behind had a good deal of mutiny in their eyes. Finding that the mistress took no notice, except to turn pale, they made a great show of drinking in concert and then setting the pails



THEY USED OULLS THEN.



down with force ; but there must sometime come a limit to drinking water, even if one be choked almost to death, and finally, after as much desperate hard drinking as they could endure, feeling that it was poor sport to fight where there was nothing to resist, the ringleader gave a signal for them to give over, and as it was never at any time even so much as alluded to by the person they meant to insult, they eventually subsided into well-behaved scholars.

There was not a little mischief of a mild kind going on, and what to the parties concerned was only moderate naughtiness, whenever we happened to have an easy teacher. In the winter a man always kept the school ; occasionally a severe one, who announced in the outset that we were all to “obey rules, and toe the mark,” or we should see trouble ; but the mild ones were comfortably interleaved, as one might say, so that the terms alternated somewhat like the seasons — if we had a rigorous period it might be followed by a temperate one.

But what could an ordinary mortal do about

government with his hands so full, classes upon classes in common studies, and some extra ones, besides teaching penmanship, and they used quills then, and he had to make and mend all the pens, walking about while he was hearing a class read, with a whole bundle of quills stuck behind one ear, while he sliced away at one in his hand, dexterously giving it the needed split by snapping his thumb against it. Indeed he needed to have eyes in the back side of his head.

The room was large ; and the seats, all full, were admirably planned (in fixing the house over) for doing mischief down under the desks. I know there was a great deal of traffic among the girls, especially in apples and pickles. In some of the families the women did not know how to make good pickles, and none so well as the girls could rate their ability in this direction, so trade was active over those of one girl's mother, who made the best, but was so stingy with them that there had to be much haggling and bribing when hers were in the under-the-desk market.

One girl was famous for her enterprise with "a

pin popper show " (meaning puppet), having a box with a picture at the bottom, which you could have the privilege of peeping at by the payment of a pin; and so briskly did she drive the business of which she had the monopoly, it was a belief current in school that she kept her family in pins.

These things all happened when we were very small; in the days when we used to trade in plummetts (which we had instead of lead pencils); and in cockles (which were sugar horns of plenty, without much sugar about them, having rolled up in them slips of paper with two lines of silly rhyme, eagerly read and treasured); when we played jack-straws and cat's-cradles silyly under the desk, and twisted whirligigs made by putting a stick through a button-mould, and gay little things they were, shooting off and going crazy and coming into collision on the slate which was their field of action; in the days when we surreptitiously whittled away our desks from underneath, to get material for the manufacture of crosses for keepsakes — the riddling and barbecuing going on so gradually as not to be found out till too late to fix the mischief

on any one individual, so that it went to the account of that ubiquitous but irresponsible personage, "Somebody;" in the days when we made the "double and twisted Lord-a-massies," and thought them works of great ingenuity, and played "intra, mintra, cutra, corn," and told one another's fortunes by the white spots on our finger-nails, eagerly watching for the growing into sight or growing off of these cloudy markings, and telling from thumb to little finger, "friends, foes, presents, beaux, journeys to go," also, with fingers tightly interlocked and held upright, run over this gibberish:

"Here's my mother's knives and forks" (meaning the whole ten), "Here's my mother's table" (the back of the hands), "Here's my mother's meeting-house" (the thumbs pointing), "And here's my mother's steeple" (with the forefingers at a sharp angle); in the days when we emulated one another in collecting scraps of bright goods, in velvet and silk, even sometimes cribbing them, I fear, and laying between the leaves of our Bibles till the volume was plethoric with the spoils of many shops and bureau drawers and work-baskets;

and when we picked the fuzz from all the gayly colored woollen garments we could lay hands on, wherewith to make variegated mats pressed inside our books, carrying it to such an extent that not a shawl, petticoat, gown or stocking was safe, and many an article of wear became threadbare before its time, to the wonderment of our mothers, until some day our pickings and stealings were discovered and the thing was put a stop to.

Then, rising to a loftier scale, we had a post-office, and voluminous was the correspondence — girls have so much to tell one another! — and nearly all assumed fictitious names, delighting to torment those not in the secret by mysterious allusions to them. We had an Idalia Garland, an Agnes Merton and Isadore Clinton (I hope they are all somewhere on this planet), and so on, but those of us who had romantic names of our own out of *The Scottish Chiefs*, and *The Children of the Abbey*, and such old-fashioned novels, did not care so much about it. Then it came to copying stories for preservation out of literary newspapers that fell in our way; the girls who could write rapidly did it for

the others. It was before the days of such floods and floods of stories, and what we had were good ones and well written. It was to our credit that we so eagerly read some I can remember. My chum wrote off for me, under the desk when the master thought she was studying, the whole of Washington Irving's *Rose of the Alhambra*. I congratulate myself that we had so true a perception of a beautiful production and of pure, choice style as to



A ROSE OF THE ALHAMBRA.

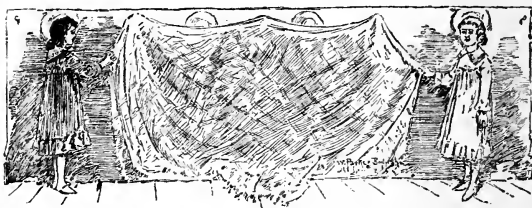
have taken that, when we were ten or twelve years old; and if the others had so felicitous a selection, their contraband proceeding was not altogether school-time loss.

Finally, at the same age, we assayed a higher step and wrote novels, each complete on one sheet of foolscap folded into a duodecimo book. Mine was about the Lady Amelia Derby. It is far easier

to write about an earl's daughter than about Susan Smith or Mary Brown. If you can have castles and diamonds, ermines, velvets and the things that go with them, you can do anything. I only wonder that there are not more flowery and high-sounding stories than there are; everybody could write if they only knew it, which fortunately they do not. We had one in our number who wrote poetry; her first production was "To a Star" — I have forgotten the lines, so many with the same title have I seen since that time, enough to comprehend a good share of the starry host on high; but the momentous fact that we had a poetess among us took such a hold on me that it could not so easily pass away.

It was during the dynasty of one of the easy men-teachers that the girls had their tents in school. All the outer wraps were hung in the schoolroom, each girl having her own nail, so that the wall on their side was tapestried with shawls and things. To pull one of these partially over her was quite easy for the girl sitting next the wall; and after it had been once done, the others took it up, holding the shawls out over their heads like a

canopy, under which they sat and studied; and this thing grew and grew till the whole side of the room was tented over, and under it they used to slip about, wandering from the back seat clear to the front. The good dominie Sampson of a master supposed them to be getting their lessons in this seclusion, and now and then coming around peeped under, approving their studiousness, seem-



A SHAWL TENT.

ing metaphorically to pat them on the back, and say, "Good girls! good girls!"

What girls those were! great in devices, full of spirit, quick to learn, ready for fun, and abounding in mischief! No simpletons they, or laggards, or pupils for a teacher to be ashamed of on that last day, when the august body called "superintending committee" were in, and two took up all



SOMETIMES HE SENT HIMSELF.



the spare time in commending the school, and the third supplemented, endorsed, rounded-up, finished off, and added the climax, by saying, "I cheerfully coincide and acquiesce in all that has been said."

But ah ! we sometimes had a reign of terror, and the school was "straightened out" — not but that it needed it, though what would you say of a teacher who would hurl a heavy ferule across the room, aiming it about two inches above a boy's head, sending it with such force that it would make a deep dent in the ceiling where it struck? As this thing went tearing through the air, as if it was shot out of a catapult, struck, and fell, he would call out to the startled and astonished one for whom it was meant to be a gentle reminder, "It might have hit you ; and now bring it to me !" Sometimes it was a book that was sent ; and sometimes he sent himself, right over the top of the desks straight to the offender, who was clutched and slung out into the floor.

There was sometimes a reckless disregard of our skulls and the brains that were supposed to be inside of them ; I think it was the "disgorge it" man

who made a great girl stand near the hot stove and hold down a nail in the floor with her forefinger (that girl has trouble with her head now). If any child was bold enough to chew gum in school, he did it at the risk of being made to bite his own tongue off, for the master would come up behind him on tiptoe, and with a quick motion with the back of his hand, knock the culprit's teeth together ; or else he would put his great palm under the chin, and holding it with a savage grasp, command, "Disgor-r-r-ge it ! disgor-r-r-ge it !"

One meek small girl laid up a lifelong grudge against him for a slight unkindness, which shows how sensitive a child's spirit may be. She went to school on a cold morning with a little plaid cape on, and when her brother unpinned it for her, she wanted to save the pin, and her hands were so cold she could not hold it, so she put it in her mouth, and it went pricking down her throat. She began to cry and the master came along and asked what was the matter, and she told him she had swallowed a pin ; he said " Oh, I guess not," and left her. She has never after these twenty years forgiven him.

Some of the masters gained the good will finally, if they had failed of it before, by the "exhibition" with which the last day of school, or the evening of it, was made memorable. The people who had the right, let us have the nearest meeting-house for our use; and on the platform in front of the pulpit the older boys enacted the part of orators and heroes. Two youths from a neighboring district did us the special favor on



A DECLAIMER.

one such occasion to go through with the scene of Brutus and Cassius, as given in the old *Scott's Lessons*: they appeared in uniform borrowed from members of an artillery company; and not Forrest or Edwin Booth, clad as Romans and with all the

accessories, could be more impressive to maturer minds than were those disputants in cutaway coats and epaulettes, who raved in good set terms.

No such thing was ever known as for a girl to recite or take part in a play, so that everything was severely masculine, till some bright genius made an innovation by proposing the presentation of *Sir Charles and Lady Rackett* from the same book ; and how it was brought about I never knew, but one of the big boys announced himself as willing to dress in girl's clothes. It was *such* an event as had never been known in our school history, and we were all so eager we could hardly wait. I doubt if Charlotte Cushman herself was ever more anxiously awaited by an impatient, watchful house than our heroine improvised for the final grand scene.

He made his entrance, or rather was to be seen, as the curtain was drawn back ; he had put on his mother's large, double-bordered and much trimmed lace cap ; and a buff gown of his sister's over his own clothes, a pair of light gloves, and a narrow ribbon fastened around his neck by a breast-pin

nearly big enough for a hand-mirror — that was his make-up, and he was large-boned, tall, angular, and strong-featured with a striding gait ; but he entered into the spirit of the scene, beginning in the most languid fine-lady air which ought to have brought down the house —

“O, la ! I'm quite fatigued. I can hardly move — why don't you help me, you barbarous man ?” in an elocutionary point of view all right, smiling and rattling on, meanwhile trying hard to forget that he had such large hands and feet, and so many of them, and that the gown was clinging about his knees, and that he was in imminent danger of being tripped up by it.

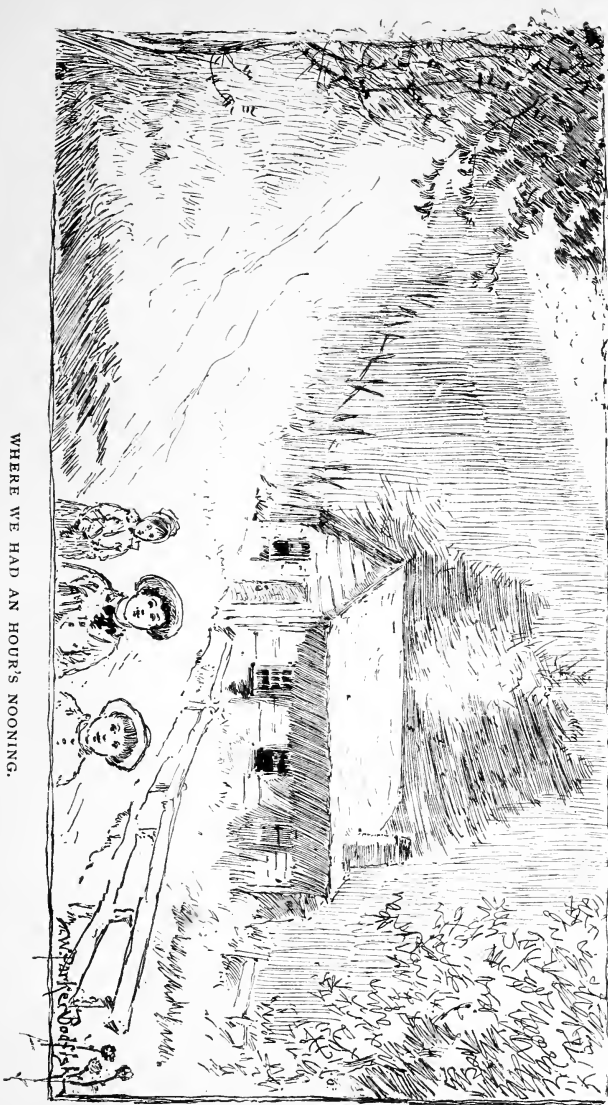
However, it was a rousing performance, an ever-rememberable one, which drew our eyes and held them, till all too soon Sir Charles and the injured lady made their exit, the curtain was drawn, and the greatest, best of the exhibitions was over.

IV.

OLD-FASHIONED GAMES.

HOW we who lived near the schoolhouse used to envy those scholars who lived so far off that they had to carry their dinners! we could only do it on stormy days, or as a favor granted after much teasing. Oh! what good times they had, with a whole hour's nooning for play, to say nothing of the felicity of eating dinner out of a tin pail or a basket, picnic fashion — things were *so* good in that way; those great wedges of pie, and the big slices of bread cut thick from an ample loaf and liberally buttered, and hunks of molasses gingerbread, and twisted doughnuts, and sometimes the drumstick or wing of a chicken, or a particularly toothsome cut of cold roast beef; and in the season of fruit, mother never failed to put in

WHERE WE HAD AN HOUR'S NOONING.



two or three apples, or a pear or two ; and all the intimates among one's mates were allowed to take just one bite till the owner was too often left with only the stem !

Just the moment school was dismissed, there was a rush for some nice place where they could sit and eat together ; and the lunch was speedily disposed of, in order to have more time for play. I remember, though, some poor children who never had any of those dainty eatables, but brought a piece of brown bread made of "rye and Indian," or a cold "Johnny cake," or some such coarse fare ; and they felt so meanly provided for that they used to steal away out of sight and eat their food slyly, hiding it if any one came near — they were so ashamed of it and for fear the others would laugh about it. Poor dears ! They have lived to have fine white bread in abundance and all the luxuries and the choicest of cooking, besides coming to be honored ; but I do believe their hearts would ache and the tears would start now, old as they are, if you were to remind them of those days which were to their childish sensitiveness so humiliating.

There were always some of those little ones who were snubbed and slighted and insulted by the few upstarts and "stuck-up" pupils whose kind was always represented in school; and such wounds cut deep when one is young, and the scars never go away.

But the games on the schoolhouse hill — they were noisy ones and they took up a great deal of room, but room was just what we had enough of, and to make a noise was one thing that we were never forbidden; and to this day I am grateful for the privilege we had, and the shouting and screaming and laughing of children at play is pleasant as music to my ear.

We had that rudest, most primitive of plays, "*Pi-son*." I think young savages must have originated it, Caffirs perhaps, or Cossacks, or New Zealanders, or some brood of Kamtschatkans or Afghans or Congo negroes, or Huns or Tartars, Sitka Indians or Sioux; possibly monkeys or gorillas might have done the same — circling and swaying, and striving to crowd one of their number against the stick set up in the centre of the ring.



“PISON.”



which stick was the “ pison ” thing to be carefully let alone and kept away from. There was one commendable thing about it ; the whole school could take part, for the bigger the ring the better, and the smallest children could be admitted. Sometimes we took the road for our field of operations, and there planted the stick, which was steadied by packing a mound of earth about it ; and then round and round in the gravel and dust we spun, straining with all our might to get somebody against it, who would then be put out of the game, while with all our might we were striving to keep off from it ourselves, swaying forward and back, to this side and that, dragging the little ones who could not keep their feet, till the fun waxed fast and furious and uproarious ; and what with our tossing hair and wild motions, we must have looked like a pack of gypsies, and every one was shouting “ *pison ! pison !* ” at the top of the voice. If we had said “ *poison !* ” it would not have been the same game ; the effort to be so proper and precise would have killed it, there would not have been any snap to it. But then, why should we be proper and precise ? were

we not having the maddest, merriest carnival, which set our pulses flying and the warm blood all aglow from our finger tips to the ends of our toes, and quickened our brains for the lesson in geography, for grammar or spelling, or the dreadful questions in Colburn's Arithmetic? And did not we always think of what all the dear aunts and grandmothers had so many times said in our hearing?—"Do let them have a good time, children can't be children but once."

Children are gregarious beings. They like to be together like sheep, or bees, or chickadees; they want to be in the thick of things, where the most is going on. Nobody was ever willing to be left out when we played "The Needle's Eye," and so two separate rings must sometimes be formed, there were so many to play.

Those youngsters always sung it as if it read in this wise:

Ther needul's eye no one can pass,
Ther thread it runs so *trew*-ly:
I *have* caught many a sweet alas,
And now I *have* caught — *you*."

And then the epithalamium which was sung over the couple (you all know the game) was this :

For you look *so* neat, and you kiss *so* sweet,
We do intend before we end
To see the couple meet.

Only, to the utter mystification of the small people, who thought, " oh, dear ! what *does* it mean ? " they really and truly made it sound thus :

To see the *scaffold* meet.

Then there were the games where one stood, or knelt, in the middle of the ring, while the others slowly or swiftly circled around, singing a verse, till at the right moment a partner was chosen who stepped in, and after some formula, the first took the vacated place, and so the choosing and changing alternated all through (you know how).

Do they play this now, I wonder ?

If I had as many wives as stars in the skies,
And all as old as Adam,
Fall down on your knees and kiss whom you please
Your humble servant, madam.

Or this, to the most rollicking measure ?

Here we stand all in a ring
For you to choose while we do sing,
Choose the one whom you love best,
And I presume 'twill suit the rest.

Then the moment the favored one was indicated,
with what derisive tones, with what mockery, and
taunting, would these words burst out !

Oh ! what a wretched choice you've made !
You'd better in your grave been laid.

Or, varied to suit the whim of the moment,

You might have done better
If you had not been afraid.
Give her a kiss and send her away,
Tell her she shall no longer stay.

Sometimes the selection was unanimously approved, in a joyful —

Oh ! what a *beautiful* choice you've made !

Has "Green grow the rushes " died out, or do
the boys and girls still join in, with voices, thin, full,

high, piping, soft, sharp, clear, shrill or sweet, in the tilting rhythm,

Green grow the rushes, O,
 Green grow the rushes, O,
 Choose your true love whom for to be
 Come and stand by the side of me.

I don't suppose, however, that in this advanced age any school children have such meaningless doggerel, such idiotic nonsense as some of the things that were as good as a farce to us ; for example :

Water merino tansy,
 Mellow go down the lane.
 I wish my father was a king,
 I wish my mother was a queen,
 And I their little companion.
 One's my thrush, two's my thrush ;
 Please, young lady, step under the bush.

At which felicitous and highly ingenious invitation, one was dropped out of the ring, and so on, until only one was left, which ended this original game.

Another about as senseless, though likewise a great favorite, had this formula :

Queen Anne, Queen Anne, she sits in the sun
As fair as a lady and bright as a bun.
King George, King George, he sent her three letters
And bids her read but one.

Some amusements we had were quite after the Kindergarten plan ; and we always held in grateful remembrance the two young folks from another town who introduced "oats, peas, beans and barley," in which all the boys and girls could join, and good for indoors or out.

It was played by forming a ring, and all moving leisurely around, to the words,

Oats, peas, beans and barley,
Oats, peas, beans and barley,
Nor you, nor I, nor no man knows
How oats, peas, beans and barley grows.

The next time round we changed the third line —

None so well as the farmer knows.

Then all stopped, let go of hands, and turning out, extended the arms, moving them forward and back, all together, and chanting as they made the motions,

This is the way he ploughs his field,
This is the way he ploughs his field,
Where oats, peas, beans and barley grows.

Then, after the chorus, and all hands round, came the harrowing, and so through the various processes of sowing, reaping, etc. But we felt (though only beginners in *Smith's Grammar*) that an important grammatical rule was being openly, recklessly and persistently defied, and were much troubled with conscientious scruples as we guiltily joined in, and thought that something ought to be done about it.

The girls had a game of their own, lightly footing it around one of their number, and singing,

We'll all dance round the barberry bush,
We'll all dance round the barberry bush,
The barberry bush, the barberry bush,
So early in the morning.

After which, the domestic little maid in the centre would lay her hands where two were joined in chain, and say, "Here I bake;" at the next, "Here I brew;" then, "Here I make my wedding cake;" and last, "Here I *must*, and SHALL, and WILL break

through ; ” and the game was, stoutly to resist her while she threw her whole weight on the two linked hands ; to clinch tight, and bear up, so as to make her try every link ; and then the fun was, at last to suddenly give way and let her down.

There were ingenious variations to this class of games, such as “ This is the way I wash my clothes and hang them on the bushes,” and “ This is the way I fold my clothes,” a neat little exercise in gymnastics, a bit of kitchen-garden ; and it was very pretty to see the plump hands and bare arms as they rubbed and wrung, and folded and ironed, and all together went through their housekeeping pantomime.

If the small folks — the infantry — were in the way, they were urgently invited to run away and amuse themselves ; and eventually might have been discovered “ tetering ” on a piece of board ; or swinging, and then jumping out to “ see the old cat die ; ” or hectoring some hapless toad, mindful, however, of the dreadful warning which some wise little man or women had picked up, “ if you kill a toad, your **cow** will give bloody milk,” or capturing grasshop-





pers and pronouncing over them the ancient formula,

Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Give me some molasses,
Or I'll kill you dead.

When it came to boisterous and athletic games, why then girls all must step aside, and be left to their own devices, or to look on. Base ball, as now played, was hardly known, but boys had what they called "goold," in which two parties engaged, choosing sides, and daring one another to run, taking captive and putting out of the game each unfortunate who, after venturing forth, failed to get safely back within protection of the *goold* or goal of his side.

"Fox-in-the-wall" was equally exciting — the fox being stationed in the middle of the road and the geese on one side, whence they made a dash across, screaming "fox-in-the-wall !" and if one was caught he in turn became fox.

"Driving ball" was capital sport, though a school nooning was rather short for that ; but the Saturday half holidays afforded unlimited opportunities, when

a boy who could bat well, had time enough to drive his opponent a mile or more, accompanied by a rout of comrades who alternately divided or cheered as the ground was lost or won. The boys were spasmodic about their amusements; there was a time when walking on stilts was the thing to do, and every urchin who could get two strips of board properly cut for a foothold, had some home-made arrangement by means of which he went stalking about, three or four feet taller than his wont, or varied the performance by inglorious tumblings to the ground, where he literally "bit the dust," as the old war-songs have it.

Then every stilt would disappear, and it was all cross-bows and bows and arrows; not a boy but diligently whittled and tested cords, and strung and twanged, and then experimented in the most reckless manner, till everybody who came in the neighborhood of the would-be archers was in danger of having their eyes put out, and nothing was safe except the mark. Then, all at once, not a bow was to be seen, and the lads big and small did no other thing in odd hours, at noon-time or recess, but pitch



ON STILTS.

quoits, till somebody invented or revived "rolling truck;" whereupon there appeared numerous wooden trucks rudely cut out of board, two being doubled and nailed together for greater strength; and the streets were no longer safe places by reason of them. The game was for one boy to hurl the truck to the ground and set it to going with tremendous speed, while other boys held down a board edgewise (very likely taken from a fence), to stop it. Woe to the man, woman or child, who, walking abroad unawares, was taken in the ankles by the truck, which would go rushing with such force as to leap the board, unless, in boy phrase, "it got stove up" by the collision.

In winter there was "snapping the whip," when all joined hands in a long string, beginning with the largest and tapering off to the least, and at a signal, away they ran at the top of their speed, and then with a sudden jerk the little fellows were whipped off, going heels over head into the snow. It was in this way that all beginners had to be used as the snapper, but mercifully when the snow was deep and there was no danger of their getting hurt.

The boys had a deal of wicked enjoyment in the "nail game," which was tried on every new comer. They would produce three nails, and say to him, "Now you see here are three nails ; if you will hide them, one at a time, we can tell where you put the last one." So he would pick up one and go off with it, perhaps out into the wood-shed ; and then come back and get the second and secrete it. Meanwhile, they had been heating one on the stove, and when he picked it up, the boys were all "on hand," as they said, and it was with such roars of laughter as only boys are capable of that they saw where he "put the last one."

This was practised at the spelling-schools, on every strange boy, and it was called "initiating" him. There were better things, however, at the spelling-schools of those long winter evenings ; and one was marching, before it was time to begin, and during intermission. I don't remember about their "marching on to odd Squebec," referred to in a former paper, but to "O-hi-o ;" the lines for which were adapted from a popular song. One boy would start, and the others fall into line, and



as they came around the second time in the single file, each would extend his hand to some girl ; and the following was the verse they sung as they marched around :

Rise, my true love, and give me your hand,
And we'll travel on to some distant land,
Where the girls card and spin, and the boys rake and hoe,
And we'll settle on the banks of the pleasant O-*hi-o* !

And the merry winding up, in a hurry, was sung out loud and strong by that good-natured girl, who was always ready to give us " Squebec " or any other of the marches :

Now you've got her, you've got her to keep.
Always prove kind, and always prove good ;
And be sure you keep her in oven-wood.













